REMARKS

Claims 16, 18-21 remain pending in the present application. By the present amendment, independent claim 16 has been amended and claims 22 and 23 have been canceled.

The Applicants have amended independent claim 16 such that the mating relationship between the contact lens element and the image forming element is effectuated without the use of an adhesive agent. The amendment of claim 16 reflects features of the invention discussed at length in the specification (p. 2, lines 24-29; p. 23, lines 31-33; p. 24, lines 1-6) and does not raise new issues that would require a new search or consideration. Further, the Applicants respectfully submit that a complete search for the most relevant prior art has already been conducted.

Volk '222 and Volk '779 teach different methods of securing a contact lens element and image forming element. In Volk '222, the lenses are not in a mating relationship. The housing is utilized to secure the appropriate lenses in position with an airspace therebetween, and also to provide an air and water seal (see Figs. 1-2, 4-5; col. 6, lines 49-55). Unlike the claimed invention, Volk '222 does not teach the mating relationship recited in claim 16, the sole independent claim.

Utilizing a completely different approach, Volk '779 appears to teach a nested mating relationship between the contact lens element and the image forming lens element. The nested mating relationship is effectuated by cementing the contact lens element and image forming lens element with glue (col. 10, lines 38-44; col. 11, lines 57-60). Therefore, Volk '779 does not teach a lens system where the contact lens element and the image forming lens element are maintained in a mating relationship without the use of an adhesive agent.

The Applicants respectfully submit that the combination of Volk '222 and Volk '779 would result in a lens system where a contact lens element and an image forming lens element are glued together and a retaining ring is used to provide an air and water seal. There are no teachings in the prior art that suggest a mating relationship without the use of an adhesive agent. The prior art teaches lens systems having either a nested mating relationship that utilizes glue, or a non-mating relationship that utilizes a housing.

Further, applicants respectfully submit that it would not have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to remove the glue in the mating relationship of the contact lens element and the image forming lens element. The Applicants are the first to recognize the advantages of removing the glue from the mating relationship. By removing the glue, it is now possible to have an autoclavable and sterilent-resistant lens system that has the optical benefits of a mating relationship between the lenses. In Volk '779, the use of glue to cement the lenses together precludes effective autoclaving and also risks glue failure, which would alter the optical properties of the lens system.

CONCLUSION

Applicants respectfully submit that the present application is in condition for allowance. The Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned to resolve efficiently any formal matters or to discuss any aspects of the application or of this response. Otherwise, early notification of allowable subject matter is respectfully solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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